

Powhatan Co: 24 Aug '65

Gentlemen

I have delayed for some days, replying to your letter of the 5<sup>th</sup> Inst: informing me of my election by the Board of Trustees, to the Presidency of Washington College, from a desire to give the subject due consideration. Fully impressed with the responsibilities of the office, I have feared that I should be unable to discharge its duties, to the satisfaction of the Trustees, or to the benefit of the Country. The proper education of youth requires not only great ability, but I fear more strength than I now possess, for I do not feel able to undergo the labors of conducting classes in regular courses of instruction. I could not therefore undertake more than the general administration & supervision of the Institution. There is another subject which has caused me serious reflection, & is I think worthy of the consideration of the Board. Being excluded from the terms of amnesty in the proclamation of the President of the U. S. of the 29<sup>th</sup> May last, & an object of censure to a portion of the Country, I have thought it probable that my occupation of the position of President, might draw upon the College a feeling of hostility; & I should therefore cause injury to an Institution, which it would be my highest desire to advance. I think it the duty of every citizen

#### General Robert E. Lee Accepts Presidency of College (1865)

Many American personages from out of the past require a note of identification and a splash of background to gain even a small measure of recognition from the modern reader. Robert E. Lee needs none. This original manuscript letter is the one in which the General accepts the presidency of Washington College (it was not until after his death in 1870 that the name was changed to Washington and Lee).